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RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 1748
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 1603
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 002090

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SUBJECT: ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: KAZAKHSTANI FOREIGN MINISTER IN
KABUL TO ANNOUNCE AID PACKAGE, PITCH OSCE SUMMIT

ASTANA 00002090 001.2 OF 002

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: On November 22, State Secretary-Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev traveled to Kabul to discuss bilateral cooperation with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and unveil Kazakhstan's 2009-2011 assistance package. Saudabayev also met with Afghanistan's Foreign Minister, Dr. Rangin Dadfar-Spanta, and the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Afghanistan, Kai Eide. The Foreign Ministers signed an intergovernmental education agreement for Kazakhstan to train 1,000 Afghan specialists in five years. Kazakhstan's Chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Committee for International Information, Roman Vasilenko, told Charge November 23 that the short -- but productive -- visit especially advanced the bilateral relationship in the areas of commercial development and educational ties. Vasilenko, who traveled with the State Secretary, said that both President Karzai and Foreign Minister Spanta enthusiastically supported Kazakhstan's proposal for an OSCE summit. With Afghan leaders' endorsement of a 2010 OSCE summit and conclusion of an education deal, which could add substance to the proposal, Post expects MFA will increase its already concerted effort to secure a summit. END SUMMARY.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE DAY IN KABUL

13. (U) According to the press, Foreign Minister Saudabayev delivered President Nursultan Nazarbayev's congratulatory message on his inauguration to Afghan President Hamed Karzai. Nazarbayev also reportedly confirmed Kazakhstan's intention to strengthen bilateral cooperation, and provide assistance with stabilization and development. Saudabayev highlighted mutually-beneficial opportunities to enhance economic and commercial relations through increased Kazakhstani participation in natural resource and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, and promotion of Kazakhstani grain imports. Foreign Ministers Saudabayev and Spanta signed a \$50 million intergovernmental education agreement -- reportedly Nazarbayev's personal initiative -- under which Kazakhstan will train medical workers, teachers, engineers, and specialists in law enforcement, border security, and agriculture. During the meeting with the UN Special Envoy, Saudabayev discussed cooperation to

stabilize Afghanistan and coordination on Afghanistan-related issues during Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

EVEN THE AFGHAN EMBASSY IN ASTANA KEPT IN SUSPENSE

14. (SBU) In the days preceding the visit, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was uncharacteristically tight-lipped. As of November 20 -- the last full working day before the visit -- they refused to disclose details of the aid package even to the Afghan Embassy in Astana. (COMMENT: PolOff's interlocutor at the Afghan Embassy, Second Secretary Siddiqullah Noori, noted his embassy's occasional frustration about the exclusive coordination that occurs directly between the Kazakhstani Embassy in Kabul and the MFA in Astana, leaving the embassy in Astana "out of the loop." END COMMENT.) Noori, who prior to his 2006 arrival in Astana worked at the Foreign Ministry in Kabul with investors and NGOs, expressed gratitude for Kazakhstan's previous assistance. While he welcomed the student aid package, he asserted the difficulty of finding opportunities for Kazakhstani-Afghan economic cooperation outside of the extractive sectors -- particularly mining. A potential logistical challenge to the education deal previously highlighted by the MFA is flight arrangements for the students. According to Noori, however, Kazakhstan has started weekly direct flights from Almaty to Kabul, and flights from Kabul to Almaty "when there are enough people to justify a flight."

SAUDABAYEV FOCUSED ON SUMMIT

15. (SBU) Following the visit, long-time Embassy contact and Chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Committee for International Information, Roman Vasilenko, told the Charge that Saudabayev congratulated President Karzai on his new mandate and focused on

ASTANA 00002090 002.2 OF 002

bilateral issues during their opening meeting. He also achieved his main goal -- an enthusiastic endorsement for Kazakhstan's bid to hold an OSCE summit on Afghanistan during its 2010 Chairmanship of the OSCE. However, Vasilenko offered no details on specific summit issues of interest to the Afghans. In his brief meeting with Foreign Minister Spanta, Vasilenko said Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister again pressed -- and won enthusiastic support for -- a 2010 OSCE summit on Afghanistan. Otherwise, the meeting mainly focused on the need for strengthened bilateral trade. (NOTE: According to official statistics, Kazakhstan exported more than \$617 million of goods to Afghanistan in 2008, including large amounts of grain. END NOTE.) Saudabayev lobbied for increased participation of Kazakhstani firms in Afghanistan's market, particularly in the natural resource and agricultural sectors.

PROVIDE FISHING RODS, NOT FISH

16. (SBU) In Saudabayev's final meeting with Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Afghanistan, Kai Eide, Vasilenko said Saudabayev discussed ways to expand Kazakhstani participation in UN projects. Saudabayev also again discussed the OSCE summit proposal. In response, Eide, a former Norwegian Ambassador to the OSCE, asserted that Kazakhstan should focus on Afghanistan's needs in building its summit agenda. He told Saudabayev that it was important to "provide fishing rods, not fish," by working with the government of Afghanistan to determine its need as Kazakhstan develops its 2010 summit proposals. Saudabayev fully concurred, adding that "it is not possible for the family to be happy, unless the head of household is pleased."

KAZAKHSTAN UPBEAT ABOUT PRODUCTIVE VISIT

17. (SBU) Vasilenko confirmed that the visit's centerpiece was the education agreement, signed by Saudabayev and Spanta, which annually will bring 200 university and graduate students to Kazakhstan over the period 2010-2018. In total, Kazakhstan plans to educate more than 1,000 students. Vasilenko asserted that sufficient institutional memory remains from Kazakhstan's Soviet experience in educating Afghan (and Vietnamese) students for the Ministry of Education to successfully implement the program and resolve logistical challenges, such as the issue of language training. He

said the Afghan government will identify and supply the students -- with a focus on technical fields, including engineering, agriculture and medicine -- and Kazakhstan will pay their expenses. Vasilenko said they did not discuss the issue of transportation. Vasilenko -- and the Afghan Embassy -- have promised to send a copy of the education agreement.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: Vasilenko called the visit's atmosphere "positive and productive throughout" and highlighted the strong press interest in Kabul related to the education program. The Foreign Ministry appears to hope that conclusion of its long-planned Afghan education program will give its OSCE summit idea more substance. Now that the State Secretary has won the endorsement of Afghanistan's leaders for the idea, especially if focused in part on Afghanistan, Post expects an even more determined MFA effort to bring doubters around. END COMMENT.

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